

SASQUATCH INVESTIGATIONS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, 1990

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INTRODUCTION

Sasquatch, reported to be a large, bipedal primate by many eyewitnesses in the Pacific Northwest, continues to represent an unresolved scientific problem. I have been interested in such reports for over three decades, and, since my retirement as a wildlife biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Game, I have had the time to be more active in fieldwork in an attempt to uncover Sasquatch evidence. This report updates my previous findings appearing in this journal (James A. Hewkin, 1989, Continuing Sasquatch Investigations in the Pacific Northwest, *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 8: 73-74).

Six field trips were undertaken into the Blue Mountains of central and northern Oregon in 1990, three of them involving horse-back travel. In addition, several miscellaneous one-day trips were undertaken throughout the year to investigate certain sites in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

During March 18-20, in the company of Jack Sullivan, I inspected areas in the southern part of the Blue Mountains, in central Oregon. I have reported on this area before (James A. Hewkin, 1989, above). We failed to find any fresh activity that could be categorized as Sasquatch-related. A similar trip was undertaken during June 19-20, also with negative results.

In northern Oregon, I was fortunate to have access to a cabin in a rather unique location in the Blue Mountains—just outside the Mill Creek Watershed, at an elevation of 4,600 feet (1,400 m). The persons who lease the cabin use it during hunting seasons and in the summer as an occasional weekend retreat. The Mill Creek Watershed, the site of numerous Sasquatch-related incidents—some of which have previously been reported in this journal—is off-limits to the public. It lies within the Umatilla National Forest, and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service for the city of Walla Walla, across the border in southern Washington State. The state boundary actually bisects the Watershed. Immediately to the east of it lies the Waneha-Tucannon Wilderness, which includes 176,800 acres (71,548 ha). A major portion of the Umatilla National Forest extends southwards into Oregon. The entire area is characterized by rugged and remote terrain.

I was able to have use of the cabin on three field trips for a total of eight days. The cabin lessees, Mike and Sheryl Jenkins, accompanied me on June

8-10. We rode the boundary trail and other areas outside of the Watershed, and observed considerable tree breakage—snapped tops of small fir trees, and broken limbs and twisted tops on some medium-sized saplings. Much of this tree damage was caused by bears, but there was some damage of undetermined origin. On June 10, the Jenkins' departed, and I continued alone until June 13.

I noticed that two buck deer were acting very "nervous" near the cabin, sensing that "something" was near. The next morning, I found and followed fresh cougar (puma) tracks up a trail for nearly a mile; that settled the question of the "nervous" deer. Another incident of interest was encountering a black bear at very close quarters. I had to actively make my presence known, as it was moving towards me on the trail, and had not detected me. I caught its attention by kicking two rotted logs. The bear halted, turned immediately, and rapidly departed—much to my relief.

The bear was very large and quite black and glossy. Bears in the National Forest are usually cinnamon-colored, with darker heads and feet and lighter shades over the body. Sometimes, they are quite blond. On one occasion, when riding with Sheryl Jenkins, I saw a platinum blond-colored bear with two platinum blond-colored cubs. There are many bears in this area. I observed 11 over a four-day period, all colored in various shades of cinnamon—except for the black one I encountered on the trail.

During June 26-29, I worked from the cabin with Jack Sullivan. We hiked over a considerable area of peaks and canyons, observing a lot of bear sign as well as a few bears. We noted a lot of tree damage, broken logs, and rolled-over rocks. On the ridges, we found that bears spend a lot of time scraping the turf for onion bulbs, sometimes scratching up several square yards of turf. It seems that bears are very active in June scratching for onions. While we could easily observe them during the day—out in the open and away from cover—while scratching for onions, no bears were seen at all in July.

During July 6-8, I rode with Sheryl Jenkins on and off the trail extensively. We examined many broken trees. We collected some blond hair samples from a small white fir tree that had recently been broken at the top. Subsequent microscopic analysis showed that it was bear hair.

During the period of July 21-29, I conducted horse-back fieldwork in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness in the company of Sheryl Jenkins and Wes Sumerlin and his wife. Sumerlin has had much experience in the Wilderness, and claims to have had some Sasquatch experiences over the years. We found plenty of bear sign, and broken trees were mostly on the ridges where low passes make attractive crossovers for game animals. These areas are known to be used extensively by bears. Inclement weather kept us under cover for two days. We saw many species, including deer and coyotes, but encountered no Sasquatch evidence.

Postscript: On January 17, 1991, I received a communication from Vance Orchard, in Walla Walla, Washington, informing me that a new series of tracks had been found by Sasquatch hunter Paul Freeman along Mill Creek. The tracks reportedly began in high snow and wandered down through wheatfields and pastureland. I traveled to Walla Walla the next day, January 18, and did an intensive survey of the situation. The tracks went through a plowed wheatfield, and winter wheat was beginning to sprout. The ground was very muddy, as snow had recently softened and melted.

My inspection and analysis of the site and the tracks indicates that they were faked. The tracks were 13 inches (33 cm) in length, and 6 inches (15 cm) in width at the toes. The stride averaged about 30 inches (76 cm), and the toes pointed outward at each stride. One left print failed to mark; it simply left a gash in the muddy soil as if the foot had broken-down sideways. At a wire-fence crossing, I noted a track under the wire—exactly where I would have placed my own foot when crossing over. A Sasquatch would surely have stood further away from the fence when stretching the other leg over the wire. When the tracks led towards the creek, they would turn back towards the road. A Sasquatch would surely have crossed the creek and entered the protected woods away from the road.

In my opinion, the tracks involved hoaxing, and were purposefully produced using cast material that was attached to usable boots.

FUTURE PLANS

Further fieldwork to locate Sasquatch evidence will be conducted in various parts of Oregon in 1991. The results will be reported to this journal.